

Message Text

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TAGS: PGOV PFOR BF

SUBJ: BAHAMIAN INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS

BEGIN SUMMARY: SIX DAYS OF BAHAMIAN INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS ENDED JULY 11 WITH GREAT SUCCESS. ASIDE FROM MINOR PROBLEMS WITH CROWD AND TRAFFIC CONTROL, EVERYTHING WENT SMOOTHLY AND IMPRESSIVELY. PM PINDLING AND THE GOBI INDEPENDENCE SECRETARIAT MADE THE CELEBRATIONS A SKILLFUL BLEND OF SOLEMNITY, PAGEANTRY AND FESTIVITY. END SUMMARY.

1. DELEGATIONS FROM OVER 50 NATIONS ATTENDED BAHAMIAN INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS (LIST OF HEADS OF DELEGATIONS BEING POUCHES) WHICH BEGAN JULY 6 AND CONCLUDED JULY 11 ALL WERE WELL TREATED AND FEW PROTOCOL PROBLEMS AROSE. THE CUBAN DELEGATION, HEADED BY FONMIN ROA, WAS UNOBTRUSIVE AND ATTRACTED VIRTUALLY NO ATTENTION. WE UNDERSTAND THEIR PITCH FOR DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS FELL ON DEAF EARS. AT THE FLAG-RAISING CEREMONY THE EVENING OF JULY 9, THE U.S. DELEGATION HEADED BY SECRETARY MORTON WAS ENTHUSIASTICALLY APPLAUDED BY THE CROWD OF 50,000 UPON ARRIVAL. SECURITY SEEMED REASONABLY ADEQUATE, ASIDE FROM SOME CONFUSION CREATED BY MILLING BUT JOVIAL CROWDS AT MOST EVENTS. PRESS REPRESENTATIVES TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT CONSIDERING THE FACILITIES AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOBI THEY HAD RECEIVED EXCELLENT TREATMENT.

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2. PM PINDLING SEEMED CLEARLY AWARE THAT FOR MANY REASONS, INCLUDING THE EXPENSE OF THE CELEBRATIONS, HE WOULD HAVE TO GIVE THE FESTIVITIES A GRASSROOTS AS WELL AS AN OFFICIAL CHARACTER. AT RECEPTIONS AND OTHER FUNCTIONS, HE SPENT AS MUCH TIME WITH LOCAL SUPPORTERS AS WITH DIGNITARIES, OFTEN TREATING THE LATTER TO THE CONSIDERABLE WIT AND ELEGANCE OF HIS WIFE. IN HIS SPEECHES AND REMARKS, THE PM TOOK CARE TO EXPLICITLY ADDRESS HIS "BROTHERS AND SISTERS" AS WELL AS THE PRINCE OF WALES, THE GOVERNOR, ETC. THE THREE STATE BALLS HELD THE EVENING OF JULY 10 WERE LARGELY LOCAL EVENTS, THE PLP STALWARTS PREDOMINATING. THE PRIME MINISTER'S MANNER WAS SMOOTH AND SELF-ASSURED THROUGHOUT THE WEEK OF CELEBRATIONS AND HE MADE AN EXCELLENT IMPRESSION ON HIS VISITORS.

3. THE DISARRAY OF THE OPPOSITION FNM BECAME EVIDENT AT THE JULY 10 CEREMONY FOR PRESENTATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL INSTRUMENTS WHEN THE SCHEDULED REMARKS BY THE OPPOSITION HAD TO BE OMITTED BECAUSE OF LACK OF A SPOKESMAN. ABACO SECESSIONIST MP ERRINGTON WATKINS APPARENTLY MADE GOOD HIS PROMISE TO BOYCOTT THE CELEBRATIONS, ALTHOUGH HE ATTENDED ONE OF THE STATE BALLS, OBVIOUSLY HAVING A BALL. THERE WAS NO SIGN OF ANY ATTEMPT TO DISRUPT CEREMONIES AND, ASIDE FROM A FEW SCATTERED CAT-CALLS WHEN THE UNION JACK WAS LOWERED AT 11:59 P.M. JULY 9, THE CROWDS WERE ENTIRELY GOOD-NATURED.

4. CHIEF CROWD-PLEASER THROUGHOUT THE WEEK WAS HRH PRINCE CHARLES, WHO BORE AN EXTREMELY HEAVY SCHEDULE OF APPEARANCES WITH GREAT GRACE, STYLE, GOOD HUMOR AND CHARM. PM PINDLING AND GOVERNOR GENERAL-DESIGNATE BUTLER ALSO RECEIVED APPLAUSE AND CHEERS WHENEVER THEY APPEARED, AS DID LOCAL CULTURAL HEROES SIDNEY POITIER, FLIP WILSON AND BILL COSBY. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER HANNA AND OTHER GOBI LEADERS APPEARED TO PLACE THEMSELVES IN THE BACKGROUND.

5. PROBABLY THE SINGLE STRONGEST IMPRESSION OF THE PAST WEEK HAS BEEN THE SENSE OF NATIONAL PRIDE, SOLIDARITY AND TEAMWORK WITH WHICH ALL BAHAMIANS -- BLACK AND WHITE, RICH AND POOR, PLP, BAY STREET OLD GUARD AND FNM MIDDLE CLASS -- ALL PITCHED IN TO MAKE THE WHOLE THING A SUCCESS.

SPEAR

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